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Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-02 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-15
MCT-01 HA-05 IO-14 AID-05 OMB-01 TRSE-00 /098 W
----------072127 212128Z /64
R 211456Z MAR 78
FM AMCONSUL BELFAST
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1879
INFO AMEMBASSY DUBLIN
AMEMBASSY LONDON

UNCLAS BELFAST 055

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, UK, EI
SUBJECT: JOINT STATEMENT ON NORTHERN IRELAND

REF: STATE 068135

1. THE MARCH 16 JOINT STATEMENT ON NORTHERN IRELAND BY SENATORS, REPRESENTATIVES, AND GOVERNORS (REFTEL) WAS PROMINENTLY REPORTED BY THE LOCAL PRESS BUT RECEIVED SCARCE COMMENT. ONLY THE AFTERNOON "BELFAST TELEGRAPH" RAN AN EDITORIAL. MODERATELY WORDED AND HEADED "MESSAGE OF HOPE," IT SPOKE OF THE STATEMENT AS AN IMPORTANT "CONTRIBUTION TO A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THE CONFLICT HERE." IT SAID THAT THE MESSAGE WAS A CAREFULLY WORDED CRITICISM OF BRITISH AND UNIONIST LEADERSHIP, HOWEVER, AND OPINED THAT IT SHOWED A SIMPLISTIC GRASP OF THE BASIC POLITICAL PROBLEM: THERE IS SOME TRUTH IN BLAMING LACK OF MOVEMENT ON THE INTRANSIGENCE OF EXTREME PROTESTANTS, BUT THE PROBLEM IS MUCH MORE COMPLICATED.

2. COMMENT: WE CAN EXPECT THAT UNIONISTS WOULD APPLAUD THE STATEMENT'S CONDEMNATION OF VIOLENCE, BUT REACT STRONGER THAN THE TELEGRAPH DID TO THE AFFIRMATION OF THE GOAL OF IRISH UNITY, AND CRITICISM OF THEM. THEY ARE LIKELY TO SEE IN THE
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STATEMENT THE HAND OF JOHN HUME, DEPUTY LEADER OF THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC AND LABOR PARTY. EXCLUDING THE IRA AND EXTREME NATIONALISTS, THE MINORITY COMMUNITY WOULD HEARTILY ENDORSE ALMOST EVERY POINT.

3. THE STATEMENT'S PENULTIMATE PARAGRAPH CITED INDICATIONS THAT A NI MAJORITY FAVORS A PEACEFUL SOLUTION FAIR TO BOTH

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SIDES OF THE COMMUNITY. THIS PRESUMABLY REFERS TO A POLL BY OPINION RESEARCH CENTRE (LOUIS HARRIS) COMMISSIONED BY ULSTER TV AND BROADCAST FEBRUARY 9. OVERALL, 63 PER CENT OF THOSE INTERVIEWED FAVORED POWER SHARING (DEFINED AS REPRESENTATION OF ALL POLITICAL PARTIES IN CABINET), AND 49 PER CENT OF THE ULSTER UNIONIST PARTY. HALF FAVORED POWER SHARING AS A PERMANENT SOLUTION. WE NOTE THAT IN THE PAST POLLS ALSO SHOWED STRONG SUPPORT FOR POWER SHARING, YET THE MAJORITY ELECTORATE FAVORED PARTIES THAT OPPOSED OR WERE SKEPTICAL OF POWER SHARING AS DEFINED.

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